



**A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby**

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**TO**            **Senator Kennedy(D-MA)**  
                 **Senator Mc Cain (R-AZ)**  
                 **Representative Dingell (D-MI)**  
                 **Representative Ganske(R-IA)**

**FROM**        **Kathy Thornton RSM, NETWORK National Coordinator**  
                 **Catherine Pinkerton CSJ, Lobbyist**

**RE**            **The Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001**

**NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby supports the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001 co-sponsored by Senators Kennedy (D-MA), Mc Cain (R-AZ), Representatives Ganske (R-IA) and Dingell (D-MI). The bill, like the Norwood-Dingell legislation which passed the House in 1999 and was consistently stalled by leadership in the Senate, responds to NETWORK's concerns.**

**NETWORK has been troubled by the catalogue of proven abuses in which many health management organizations jeopardized patients' lives by giving priority to cost-cutting or profit-making measures, rather than respecting the right of the patient to competent, necessary diagnosis and treatment.**

**First, unlike the Senate-passed legislation, all 160 million privately insured Americans would be covered by the provisions of this bill. They would be guaranteed strong protections, chief among them access to emergency and specialty care. Further, they would be protected by limitations on the ability of health plans to offer financial incentives to medical personnel, incentives designed to deny care, a major cause of unrest and distrust. Employers, too, would be protected. In language stronger than that of the Norwood-Dingell bill, employers would be liable for decisions made by managed care plans only if they are directly involved in a decision.**

**NETWORK especially supports the right of individuals to sue their HMO's when it has been proven that needed care is delayed or denied. All cases involving issues of medical necessity would be dealt with in state courts while cases involving contract terms would proceed through federal court.**

**States would be able to craft their own patient protection laws, certifying that their laws are comparable to federal law. In the case of provisions that are present in the federal bill, but not currently in state law, the federal law would be applicable.**

**NETWORK views the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001 one on which those members of Congress who support the right of patients to quality health care and recognize the role of doctors and other trained personnel to make competent medical judgments can and must agree. NETWORK urges passage of the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001.**